

Board of Chiropractic Examiners

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Physical Therapy Procedures in Chiropractic Practice

The scope of chiropractic practice is set forth in Title 16, Division 4, Section 302 of the California Code of Regulations. Section 302(a)(2) states that “As part of a course of chiropractic treatment, a duly licensed chiropractor may use all necessary mechanical, hygienic, and sanitary measures incident to the care of the body, including, but not limited to, air, cold, diet, exercise, heat, light, massage, physical culture, rest, ultrasound, water, and physical therapy techniques in the course of chiropractic manipulations and/or adjustments.”

The phrase “in the course of chiropractic manipulation and/or adjustments” means that during the care of the patient with chiropractic methods, including manipulation and/or adjustments, a duly licensed chiropractor may use physical therapy procedures to further the goals of the chiropractic treatment. The law does not affix a percentage of the visits in a course of treatment of a patient, which must include manipulation/adjustments; this is left to the judgement and discretion of the doctor of chiropractic. It is assumed that, upon examining the patient during each visit, the doctor has determined that chiropractic manipulation/adjustment is indicated and that this becomes, in most cases, a major portion of the treatment rendered.

However, there are cases when a few sessions of manipulation succeed in resolving the articular problem, but the residuals (i.e., paraspinal muscular tightness or spasm) may, if left unattended, exacerbate the articular problem. In this case, treatment could very well consist of 4 to 6 visits that include the chiropractic manipulation/adjustment, with the remaining visits consisting of physical therapy techniques. Essentially, the phrase “in the course of chiropractic manipulation and/or adjustment” characterizes the physical therapy procedures as being *adjunctive* to the chiropractic manipulations and/or adjustments and in *furtherance* of the chiropractic objective.